

CITY OF VANCOUVER
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

A Special Meeting of the Council of the City of Vancouver was held on Tuesday, November 8, 1977, commencing at 11:00 a.m., in the No. 1 Committee Room, Third Floor, City Hall to consider a Review of the Official Regional Plan for the Lower Mainland of B. C.

PRESENT: Mayor Volrich (in the Chair)
Aldermen Bellamy, Brown, Ford, Gerard,
Harcourt, Kennedy, Marzari,
Puil and Rankin.

ABSENT: Alderman Gibson

CLERK TO THE COUNCIL: M. L. Cross

1. Review of the Official Regional Plan for the Lower Mainland of B.C.

Council on October 18, 1977 noted a letter dated October 4, 1977 from the Chairman of the Greater Vancouver Regional District Planning Committee concerning a Review of the Official Regional Plan and requesting a meeting with Council. The request was granted. Mr. M.V. Jones, Consultant, and Mr. G. Farry, Director of Planning, Greater Vancouver Regional District, were present to review the Official Regional Plan.

Mr. Farry advised that the regional planning functions of the Official Regional Plan for the Lower Mainland were transferred from the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board by Order-In-Council in 1969 to the four regional districts in the Lower Fraser Valley, one of which is the Greater Vancouver Regional District. The four regional districts were given separate amending powers over the Official Regional Plan in their area but in order to maintain cohesion the Lower Mainland Review Panel was formed as a mandatory advisory body on all Plan amendments.

The principal objectives of the Official Regional Plan were to conserve land resources and to:

- a) keep urban sprawl off the floodplains and farmlands and direct urban growth to those areas which the municipalities could properly service;
- b) designate major industrial areas and keep them free of urbanization;
- c) establish major park and several other reserve categories.

The designations in the Plan do not supersede any municipal zoning which pre-dates the Plan and there frequently is conflict between the Plan and local zoning, particularly in the RURAL-designated areas. However, further zoning changes not conforming to the Plan are prevented. It was hoped that municipalities would bring their by-laws into conformity with the Regional Plan but this has occurred in only a few instances.

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Many of the problems addressed by the Plan have been dealt with by more stringent legislation, regulation or policy by the municipalities or by the Provincial Government i.e., farmland is now reserved under the Land Commission Act and is zoned by most municipalities. The floodplain is protected by Provincial regulations, although the Official Regional Plan is used as the guide to areas where urban development is permissible. Most municipalities now have sewage systems and treatment plants. Some municipalities have exclusive zoning for industry in their industrial zones. Many of the areas of UNDETERMINED RESERVE have been redesignated to suitable categories over the decade.

The most significant role of the Official Regional Plan, which has not been superseded by more explicit legislation of other bodies, is control of the conversion of rural land to urban purposes.

Present Regional District Board members have expressed concerns that the Official Regional Plan had limited value to the metropolitan area i.e.:

- Lots of Official Regional Plan amendments seem to have no regional significance; why are we dealing with them?
- Floodplain and farmland are not being protected adequately even with Provincial intervention.
- The Official Regional Plan is not an even-handed set of policies as between the municipalities.
- Who are the Lower Mainland Review Panel and what powers do they have?
- There does not seem to be adequate criteria by which we can judge Official Regional Plan amendment applications.
- Where would we be today if the LMRBP had not acted on the floodplain, farmland, industrial areas and parkland?

As a first step in undertaking a review of the Official Regional Plan, Ms. M. Rawson, former Commissioner of the B. C. Land Commission, was asked to draft a discussion paper on what the ORP Review should accomplish and how to do it. The following is a synopsis of some of the main points:

- The Official Regional Plan succeeded in preventing the worst abuses of the land resources of the Lower Mainland and there is considerable support for it although there is also irritation with the administrative burden.
- A new concept plan and statement of policies is needed for the whole Valley which addresses today's issues and tomorrow's needs.
- Consciousness of the Valley problems has been lost sight of by existing political bodies, or is not understood by most of the population (who, incidentally, were not here 10 years ago when the Official Regional Plan was adopted).

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- Information about the whole Valley has not been kept up and will be needed if Valley-wide policies are to be updated.
- The effectiveness of dividing the regional planning function between four Regional Districts is questionable considering only one has really been able to continue the level of activity carried out by the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board.
- The role of the Provincial Government in regional planning in the Lower Fraser Valley requires clarification in respect to the many provincial programmes which relate to development and management of growth.
- Provision of water and sewer services has not been the effective servant of planned growth as envisioned in the Official Regional Plan; these policies need reconsideration.
- There are gaps in the Official Regional Plan on environmental, transportation and town centre matters that have not been filled through additions to the Official Regional Plan to cover these as had been intended.

Following considerable discussion at joint meetings, at the Lower Mainland Review Panel and with Ms. Rawson, staff and Planning Committee recommended that the 1977 Work Programme carry out the following tasks:

- a) Survey the municipalities and other agencies using the Official Regional Plan to determine what their objectives are for an ORP Review and what they would expect out of a revised Official Regional Plan.
- b) Evaluate the past 10 years' performance of the Official Regional Plan to determine the areas of success and the areas of failure.
- c) Inventory the data available in municipal and regional offices and in the offices of other agencies and assemble the data as far as possible.
- d) Define issues and concerns of growth and growth management in the Lower Fraser Valley.
- e) Recommend the most important housekeeping changes to the Official Regional Plan that require immediate attention.

The above Work Programme is the subject of the Official Regional Plan Review being undertaken by Messrs. Connelly and Jones on behalf of the Regional Districts and co-ordinated by the Joint Staff Committee.

Mr. M. Jones, Murray V. Jones and Associates Ltd., advised that as part of the assignment of the Review of the Official Regional Plan he and Mr. J. Connelly are conducting a series of interviews with the various Councils and their staff as well as Federal and Provincial officials and representatives of the private sector. From the interviews they hope to get a consensus

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of what kind of Regional Plan there should be, how extensive it should be and what it should address itself to.

A set of questions, to provoke discussion, has been prepared by the consultants:

"(i) How has the ORP assisted your municipality?

What we want to find out with this question is how the ORP has addressed your conception of regional issues such as population and employment distribution, transportation, servicing, etc. If it has not assisted in addressing these matters what value has it been to your municipality?

(ii) Has the action of the Province made an ORP more or less necessary? Or does the Provincial role mean that ORP should address different matters of a regional nature?

(iii) Is there a need for a 'regional plan' of the lower mainland area (the area now contained in the ORP area) or should 'regional' planning be divided among the Regional Districts?

As you know, since the dissolution of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board in 1969 there has been no body responsible for lower mainland planning (except the minor advisory role of the Review Panel). We want to discover the nature and extent of inter-District - regional - issues, if any, that would lead us to comment on what kind of an ORP there should be or, whether a series of District plans (combined with Provincial controls) would be adequate.

(iv) How should a new ORP (as defined by your response to earlier questions) relate to the local planning system?

We are of the opinion that in order to answer the question: what kind of ORP is wanted, it is necessary to identify not only the role of the Province and inter-district relations but also to clearly set out the extent and nature of the planning function of the local municipalities. In doing so we hope some consensus might be reached on where the main effort should be in revising the present ORP.

(v) Are there other relevant matters we have not mentioned that you feel are important to the ORP review? "

Mr. Jones stated that his purpose is to try to determine whether there is a need for a Plan that applies to the whole of the Lower Mainland or whether regional planning on a regional district basis is adequate. At the present time the legislative basis for regional planning is simplistic -- the 1966 legislation states the Official Regional Plan shall consist of a Plan of land use and a highway plan. This is a simple approach to the complex area of regional planning. Mr. Jones advised that he is trying to determine the kind of planning mechanism that is needed. He noted that his terms of reference are to review the Official Regional Plan, not the Livable Region Plan.

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In discussion the Council members noted their concerns:

- Not much new is going to happen in the Official Regional Plan Review however it should be supported fully as municipalities should look at the overview of everything that is happening.
- Municipal objectives are overruled in Victoria - it is pointless to pretend that you can do regional planning if the controls are somewhere else.
- Some assumptions of the Livable Region Plan do not stand up i.e., population and job targets - there is a serious failure in the LRP to recognize the core city - cannot see anything in the LRP that is going to assist Vancouver in its present problems.
- The most important statement is, "The role of the Provincial Government in regional planning requires clarification in respect to the many Provincial programmes which relate to development and management of growth." Provincial Government decisions have drastic effects on the ORP. Important gaps are transportation and the Town Centre Concept. It is necessary to get the effects of Provincial Government programmes and resources. To have a regional plan that does not include regional town centres and transportation is useless.
- In answer to question (i) most members of Council felt the ORP had not assisted a great deal - the major impact has been through the LRP.
- Question (iv) is the key frustration. In Vancouver, after years of working with various actors on a concept for the Burrard Inlet Waterfront, including new zoning designation, the GVRD will not designate the area as Urban rather than Industrial.
- There is an innuendo that the ORP is not needed because some of its functions have been taken over by other controls - if you do not retain the ORP function for Regional Districts the Provincial Government may take over all of the functions - we have to retain the ORP.
- A Regional Plan will not succeed unless downtown Vancouver is a success. Vancouver has to encourage industry and keep jobs in the City.
- There are conflicts between what may be socially desirable objectives for a region and the inflexibility of the ORP.
- At the moment there are a number of reviews:
 - 1) The Planning Department is reviewing the local area planning procedure and the downtown zoning.
 - 2) The Vancouver City Planning Commission is reviewing the City Plan and policies for Vancouver.

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- 3) The LRP is coming up for review in December.
- 4) The Provincial Government has set up a Task Force to review the role of Regional Districts.

What happens to all these reviews? It is important that the various levels and Plans be co-ordinated much better than they are now.

Mr. W. Curtis, City Engineer, stated that there should be an analysis made from the City's point of view with respect to the relationship between the Official Regional Plan and the Livable Region Plan. The Mayor directed the Director of Planning to prepare such a report.

Mr. Jones summarized the comments of the Council as follows:

- a) Yes, an Official Regional Plan is needed. It should have inter-district application, therefore some form of political control on an inter-district basis.
- b) The Plan should address itself to all major regional issues i.e., land use, transportation, servicing, population, employment distribution, etc.
- c) The Plan should be integrated with other current reviews i.e., City Plan and the Regional District Review.
- d) Provincial interest in the area should be articulated in the Official Regional Plan.

The Mayor indicated that there was consensus to sit down with the Provincial officials in order to discuss clarification of the role of the Provincial Government in regional planning in the Lower Fraser Valley in respect to the many Provincial programmes which relate to development and management of growth, as well as ways and means, transportation planning can become part of the whole process. He advised that arrangements would be made to carry out these discussions.

The Special Council Meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

The foregoing are Minutes of the Special Council meeting of November 8, 1977, adopted on November 22, 1977.

MAYOR

CITY CLERK